

MASONRY IN MANITOBA

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CAN FREEMASONRY HELP?

(Third installment)

THE FAILURE OF THE FULFILMENT OF LIFE—THE PROBLEM OF PERSONALITY. Not a little of the political disorder, social unrest, moral delinquency, and mental distress of our century are due to the fact that we have so many frustrated lives, divided selves, and so many people giving way to self pity, which is a form of soul poisoning. The people we meet from day to day reflect this modern mood. We hear it said: "I own houses, but I have not a home," or "There are very few people whom one can trust," or "I have not had a real chance in life," or "Nothing seems to go right for me." Such statements are sad commentaries on our contemporary life. With the wonderful advances we have made in applied science and improved development.

What has Freemasonry to say in relation to the fulfilment of life? Freemasonry is psychologically sound and morally right in insisting upon a profession of faith in the living God by all who seek to share in its mysteries. Faith is more than belief, more than an intellectual claim. It is a personal trust to be fulfilled in loyalty and in fidelity to Him who gave us birth and being. The great thing about our lives is the quality of our self-consciousness, by reason of which we can overcome the world. Our advance in life and our development in culture have been partly due to the fact that we have been slowly entering into an increasing dominion. Our self-consciousness permits us to go beyond ourselves, and to interest ourselves in one another, and in God and His world-purpose. Here it is that Freemasonry puts us on the way of finding the real fulfilment of life. It insists upon each one of us starting our Masonic career by building up a moral character on the foundation of faith in the living God. We live by faith. The choice of those in whom we can put our faith is limited to three—we can trust God, we can trust a brother man, or we can trust ourselves. The more self-conscious we are, the harder it can be for us to find the fulfilment of life. Personality is a paradox; we can only find our real selves by losing ourselves in the lives of others, particularly in God. Freemasonry also teaches us that faith functions through fellowship, and that love expresses itself in charity. We are taught to be practical; we know that it is by a mutual sharing of what we are and what we have that life will be fulfilled for others as well as for ourselves.

Freemasonry rightly understood, and its teaching faithfully followed, will not only help us to become better citizens ourselves, but will also enable us to bring light and hope to darkened minds and depressed hearts. Indeed, it is enjoined upon us in one of our charges that "to improve the morals and correct the manners of men in society must be our constant care."

Two things may deter us from responding to this exhortation—the knowledge that, generally speaking, people do not want to be improved in manners and morals, and that, with the growing complexity of life and so much confused counsel even among experts, individual effort seems presumptuous and its results negligible. But, who knows? A word in season, a kind act when the occasion demands, and a consistent example daily given may release such light and power as to save a soul from despair, and assist a life to grow in usefulness. Be that as it may, we are all builders, expected to play a worthy part in building a temple not made with hands. It is our privilege to keep the plan of T.G.A.U. always in mind, to work with the specified materials, and to put the best we know into each day's work, so that we may share in the exhilarating joy of achievement.

(The end)

BUILDING MATERIAL

An important conference which in due course will have far reaching effect was recently called by the M.W. Grand Master. The conferees were the official representatives appointed to attend on behalf of the different allied bodies.

M.W. Brother Walter C. McDonald intimated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss certain matters which were of deep concern to him as Grand Master. He explained that similar concern had been voiced by other Jurisdictions in discussion at the recent All-Canada conference of Grand Lodges held in Toronto.

Two of the problems were taken up at the meeting held in Winnipeg: (a) The suspension or dismission of a brother from his Craft Lodge and his continuation in full membership in one of the so-called "higher bodies." (b) The advisability of setting an arbitrary waiting period between the date a brother is raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason and his making application to any body requiring membership in the Craft as a prerequisite.

These matters are not abstract theories—the facts reveal that brethren have been under suspension as Master Masons and yet have continued their membership and were considered in good standing in other bodies. Others have been known to take their dimit in the belief they could do so and continue in these other organizations who had originally demanded active lodge membership in a prerequisite sense.

The only real Masonic tie is severed when a brother takes his dimit, is suspended or expelled.

One might ask "When is a Mason not a Mason?" The preceding paragraph answers this question. It was in the Craft Lodge that you were made a Mason and it is only in a Craft Lodge that you can maintain your identity as a Freemason.

Perhaps it will be of advantage to some of our carefree, easy going, lackadaisical members if we repeat at this point the full context of Rule No. 10 adopted by the Grand Lodge of Manitoba.

"It shall be deemed an act of Unmasonic Conduct for any member of any lodge under the jurisdiction of Manitoba, A.F. & A.M., to use his membership in Freemasonry as a basis for securing admission into or membership of any body or society hereafter to be formed or established in this Grand Jurisdiction which requires Freemasonry as a basis for such membership. This resolution shall not in any way be construed or implied as a recognition of any body or society requiring Freemasonry as a basis for membership and which may now be in existence in this Jurisdiction."

The most Worshipful Grand Master is the governing head of Freemasonry in Manitoba. He has taken the first step to bring about some corrections in his Jurisdiction. There seems a need for some uniform regulation and the remedy is obvious. If this can be accomplished it will relieve a young entered apprentice from embarrassment especially when as he first enters the Craft he is importuned by a misguided friend seeking his application to a body which is as much a mystery to him as the remainder of his Craft degrees.

Let us make proper use of our building material.

TWIN LIBERTIES OF MASONRY

Masonry is an attitude to life. Its landmarks cannot be located precisely because they mark, or delimit, areas of conduct in action, apprehension in the mental world and assurance on the planes of the eternal. It accepts the ancient adage "as above, so below," but so vast is this subject that articles and essays only nibble at it; nothing but the leisurely flow of a book can elucidate, i.e. "shed light upon," its significance. Only in the river of organized discussion that a good book affords, can gold of truth be gleaned in satisfactory quantity. The "man of few words" is not the ideal teacher for the regular run of people. He is apt to be too condensed in expression, too crystallized in phrase for the ear of people whose attention is assaulted by a thousand distractions. His wisdom, dropping from his lips like nuggets, is more suited to devoted disciples who have forsaken all else to attend upon him. The tongue-tied man is too apt to speak in aphorisms that sound dogmatic in headings and sub-titles that

are too concentrated a fare for ready absorption. But the speaker who can bear us along on a slow current of words, saying and repeating in a variety of ways his thoughts, he is the more effective teacher. So it is that only in books of generous proportions can we gather up the sense and feeling of so abstract a philosophy as Masonry propounds.

The great books on Masonry are in general agreement that the Craft is, either in fact or implication, an "overlay" of many civilizations. Wherever we dig we come upon layer after layer of preceding cultures. It contains traces of Mithraism, of Gnosticism, of the early mystic church and shows a benevolent face toward non-doctrinal and simple awareness of Deity. It is a deep boring through many strata of human concepts, but always in every layer it shows a sublimity of moral responsibility.

It is established that the most unusual characteristic of the early Freemasons was, as the name stresses, their freedom. Whereas in the matters of wages, conditions and travelling, the local workers were decidedly not free but rather in bondage to lords or civic governors, the Free-masons owed allegiance only to their Order, made their own terms and went where they wished. This could only be possible to men who were masters of their profession and members of a revered Society. They were Masters, "magistri," of building, of geology, of sculpture, painting and physics; not each in all these arts, but each in his own ability, and besides or because of his mastery of one or more of these great subjects, the individual master possessed a breadth of culture not available to the local workers, but rather kept exclusively for the aristocracy.

Though we speak of the Free-masons in the plural it is not as individuals we should think of them but always as an Order, this being supported by the fact that no individual names have been passed down to us, however admirable the work, and also by the fact that changes in style took place all over Europe, concurrently. They were wont to follow the banners of the Church when and where the great missionaries decided to build those majestic fanes, but the skill and science and beauty was not from the founding fathers, not from the monks, who sometimes claimed the honor (and it must be remembered that monks did most of the history-writing) but the product of intensive study in secret depositaries of teaching, in secluded centres such as Switzerland, the Pyrenees and the Piedmontese lakes provided, where books of priceless erudition enshrined the geometry of Egypt, the physics of Babylonia and the canons of proportion of Greece, since lost to the world by the tragedy of the Alexandrian holocaust and the book-burnings of the Middle Ages.

That the masters used Signs, Tokens and Oaths is quite understandable and from the earliest centuries of our era come allusions to "Solomon" and the "lion-grip." The one perhaps to refer to the source and centre of their Order, the other to recog-

nize and honor each Brother. In guarding their secrets even to the death they preserved their freedom, for no man would gain those secrets from a master by any criminal coercion, it was useless to try, and, moreover would rebound on his head by the solid antagonism of the whole fraternity.

The characteristic of freedom which distinguished the old magistri is preserved in Masonry by the twin freedoms of religious preference and of the soul. Freedom of religious preference in demanding only the belief in an over-ruling consciousness which consequently ordains the triumph of righteousness, and freedom of the soul as a consequence, from the fetters of fear and the terrors of doubt.

Masonry, being Free or Speculative, we apply the forms of the tools to our morals, and it is just the "free man" who must do this. The bondman has it done for him!

—W.R.M., Seven Oaks.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

With this issue we lay down our pen for two months and the tinted leaves of autumn will have made appearance before you read again the pages of our Manitoba publication. Of course your editor won't be idle because this modest little paper takes some preparation consequently he will be obliged to keep his weather eye open for items which he considers will interest his readers.

Our request for contributions has not met with unqualified success. True, a few interested brethren have sent in commendable items but surely there are scores who have tales to tell of some Masonic incident which only the individual now remembers.

It is surprising how bits of Masonic news come from strange and unexpected places. In this category we reproduce a copy of a letter found in the Public Archives at Ottawa and we know it will be doubly interesting to the brethren of Mount Sinai Lodge, Winnipeg.

The communication is dated Victoria, May 21st, 1863, and reads: "A. Hoffman, Esq., Sir, At a meeting of Victoria Lodge No. 1085 E.R., held this evening, it was unanimously resolved, that the Lodge accept the invitation of the Congregation Emanuel, EI to lay the foundation stone of their Synagogue and the following committee was duly appointed. Robert Murray, George Pearks, Wm. H. Thain, I. A. McCrea, James Curtis.

Respectfully yours,

Wm. H. Thain, Sect. Lodge 1085."

Perhaps some of our brethren now residing on Vancouver Island may be interested in the names of five brethren active in Masonic affairs 86 years ago. Doubtless there are descendants of these pioneers still resident around Victoria.

Now that I have given an example of what is considered an interesting item, perhaps you can top it by another out of your own experience.

LEARN COMPASSION

Speaking before an audience of students recently a well known world affairs analyst used as his topic the words "Tearmarks of Progress." In the course of his remarks he suggested that "the paths of true progress must be moistened with the tears of human understanding."

In the course of his address the speaker made this statement "there is more hope for the world today in those tears which were shed 2000 years ago (over the city of Jerusalem) than there is in all the political and economic and military contraptions conceived by the master magicians east or west of the iron curtain."

To the students who comprised his audience he had this admonition which is applicable to a much wider group than those in attendance, and it could profitably be accepted by the brethren of the Masonic Craft.

Go on with your academic (Masonic) studies.

Continue with your search for hidden truths.

Carry on the work of self-development, but watch the direction of your progress.

Avoid the deceptive tangents which lead to perversion.

Never let the skills of your hand or your head alienate you from the culture of your heart.

Never reach the place where you cannot weep with those who weep, or rejoice with those who rejoice.

A MASON AND A CITIZEN

In all our teachings in the Masonic lodge we stress the part to be played by the individual in our human society. We urge the member to be a good citizen. We encourage him to take an active interest in the good government of his community, not in any narrow political sense, but to the end that better government will result.

This should focus our attention on providing the best there is in education, not at cut rate bargains, but with due regard to what is fair to the teacher, good for the pupil and just to the taxpayer.

Not only does education and local government need our personal interest but it is our business to give good advice and practical support in the movement toward a better understanding of the social needs of those who need the help of their fellow citizen.

Your membership in a Masonic lodge should strengthen the moral fibre of your citizenship.